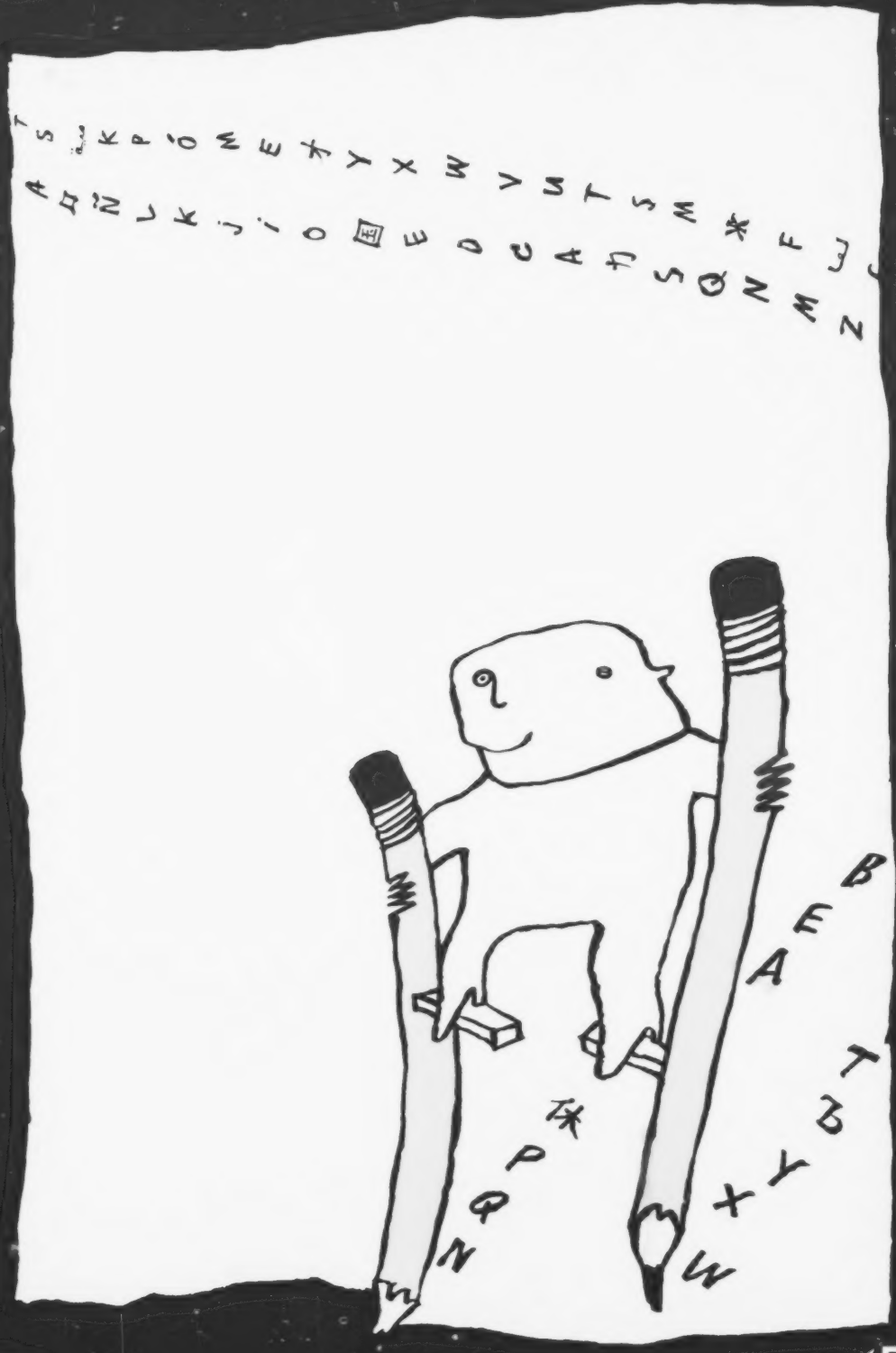
ILY: YEAR OF OPPORTUNITY



UNESCO

INTERNATIONAL LITERACY YEAR

ILY: YEAR OF OPPORTUNITY

Published by the International Literacy Year
Secretariat of Unesco, Paris, May, 1990.

READEX
FICHE

The official ILY poster, on the cover, is the work of Miss Zabelle Côté of Montreal, Canada. Miss Côté's design, submitted by the Unesco Commission of Switzerland, where she is studying graphic arts, was selected as the winning entry in a worldwide contest by an international jury. Miss Côté explains that by placing her character on pencils, she wishes to convey the message that "the ability to read and write gives people a new perspective on life and the world around them".

This document is printed on acid free paper

Printed in Canada by CODE, The Canadian Organization for Development through Education.

Dear Reader,

International Literacy Year, 1990, must be a summons to ***ACTION,*** *not a celebration. This booklet contains ideas and suggestions about what* ***YOU*** *can do in your home, school and community, and governments,* ***DURING*** *and* ***AFTER*** *ILY.*

We stand today on the threshold of a new century and a new millenium. The time for action is ***NOW*** *– the time to begin building a better tomorrow through education.*

Federico Mayor
Director-General

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Dear little child, this little book
Is less a primer than a key
To sunder gates where wonder waits
Your "Open Sesame!"

Rupert Hughes, With a First Reader

Illiteracy... A Major Concern of the United Nations

"Illiteracy is a major concern of the United Nations because, for nearly one thousand million women and men, the illiterate adults of the world, the right to education proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is not, as yet, a reality. Illiteracy is not only an obstacle to effective participation in society: in much of the developing world, where mass illiteracy is rife, it constitutes a threat to the progress of society itself with all that entails in suffering, deprivation and missed opportunities."

Javier Pérez de Cuéllar
Secretary-General of the United Nations, at the launch of International Literacy Year, 6 December 1989, United Nations Headquarters, New York.

Foreword

The essential message of this booklet is that you can make a difference. Whoever you are and wherever you may be, you can contribute to achieving the objectives of International Literacy Year in a variety of perhaps modest, yet important, ways. And the success of the Year depends upon your doing so. The cause is a vital one. Without literacy, education is enfeebled; and without education, our planet is endangered.

This booklet consists of two parts. The first, "Identifying the Issues", poses the problem of illiteracy in the world - what it is, what it means, whom it affects, and what International Literacy Year aims to do about it. The second part, "Towards a Solution", describes some of the things you, the reader, can do to promote literacy in your home, school and community, as well as through organizations and governments.

Unesco wishes to record its gratitude to the Government of Canada for its support for this publication. Special thanks are due to officials of Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada. Thanks are also owed to the Canadian Commission for Unesco and, in particular, to Mrs Mariette Hogue, Programme Officer (Education), for her advice and help. Unesco expresses its particular appreciation to CODE, the Canadian Organization for Development through Education, which has printed this publication, for its efficient and excellent work. Thanks are due, namely, to Mr Robert Dyck, Director, to Ms Rosamaria Durand, his replacement during a sabbatical leave, as well as to all others who helped to see this publication through to completion and dispatch. Mr. John Fox, IBE-Unesco, graciously contributed drawings used to illustrate the text.

Assertions and opinions expressed in this booklet do not necessarily reflect the official policy of Unesco. Comments or requests for copies may be addressed to:

International Literacy Year Secretariat
Unesco
75700 Paris
France

Education Matters and Matters Greatly...

"The message of International Literacy Year, then, is that education matters and matters greatly. Nothing is more fundamental or essential to our progress as individuals or societies than the development of human competence and skills through education and training. Literacy is the vehicle of education - the means through which ideas, information, knowledge and wisdom are expressed and exchanged ... . Yet, ... there are nearly one thousand million adults in the world - nearly two-thirds of them women - who are denied the most essential skill for coping with the modern world: literacy. Moreover, in the developing nations, there are over 100 million children of primary-school age who are not enrolled in school and are thus in danger of becoming the adult illiterates of the 21st century. Conscience and common sense alike demand that we denounce and - most of all - act to correct this situation, which is so wasteful of human potential, so unjust and so unnecessary ..."

Federico Mayor
Director-General of Unesco, at the launch of
International Literacy Year, 6 December 1989,
United Nations Headquarters,
New York.

IDENTIFYING THE ISSUES

Illiteracy in the World

The first of January 1990 marked both the beginning of the last decade of the twentieth century and the first day of International Literacy Year (ILY). The purpose of this Year, proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations and led by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco), is to mobilize resources and wills to create a literate world. The problem of illiteracy is immense. As International Literacy Year opens, there are an estimated 963 million illiterate adults, 26.9 per cent of the world's adult population. This is an affront to human dignity, evidence that the right to education proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is not yet a reality, and a situation as wasteful of human potential as it is unjust and unnecessary. But it does not suffice to denounce it, we must act vigorously to correct it.

Education is a vital and pervasive force in all aspects of the life of individuals and societies. Illiteracy does not, of course, preclude knowledge or wisdom. Indeed, there is genius in the oral traditions of all nations and peoples. Yet, in the modern world, education is the most essential condition and powerful agent of progress. And literacy, the ability to interpret and manipulate written symbols - that is to read and write - is the most basic and necessary of learning skills, the "key" that gives access to the storehouse of knowledge.

Literacy has been defined as extending from "reading the word to reading the world". It is essential to everyday activities we take for granted - such as reading a newspaper, telephoning, taking the bus, making simple money transactions, reading directions on medicines or pesticides, writing to a relative or friend - and has been linked with improved health practices, lower infant mortality rates and greater life expectancy.

"Literacy, properly understood, is not only an initiation in the three R's, but also an apprenticeship in coping with the modern world", wrote Colin Power, the Assistant

Unesco Releases New Literacy Statistics

As this publication goes to press, the Unesco Office of Statistics is in the process of updating its estimates and projections of illiteracy in the world. The most striking result of this review is that the number of illiterates is higher than previously estimated. Whereas the earlier estimate for 1985 was 889 million illiterate adults (age 15 and older), the more recent estimate for the same year is 965 million: an increase of 76 million. This change takes into account more recent and accurate census data from a number of key countries. On the positive side,the absolute number of illiterates has, for the first time, been stabilized and has even begun to decline very slowly. The decline in the percentage of illiterates among adults, which has been observed for forty years, will continue and, indeed, accelerate, falling from nearly 30 per cent in 1985 to a projected 22 per cent in the year 2000.

Adult Illiterates (Age 15 and over) and Illiteracy Rates

	Adult Illiterates (in millions)			Illiteracy Rates (%)			Decrease 1985-2000
	1985	1990	2000	1985	1990	2000	% Points
World Total	965.1	962.6	942.0	29.9	26.9	22.0	-7.9
Developing Countries,	908.1	920.6	918.5	39.4	35.1	28.1	-11.3
Sub-Saharan Africa	133,6	138,8	146,8	59.1	52.7	40.3	-18.8
Arab States	58,6	61,1	65,8	54.5	48.7	38.1	-16.4
Latin America/Caribbean	44,2	43,5	40,9	17,6	15,2	11.3	-6.3
Eastern Asia	297,3	281,0	233,7	28,7	24,0	17.0	-11.7
Southern Asia	374,1	397,3	437,0	57,7	53,8	45.9	-11.8
Developed Countries	57.0	42.0	23.5	6,2	4,4	2.3	-3.9

Who's Illiterate?

Unesco defines a literate as one "who can with understanding both read and write a short simple statement on his everyday life'. Yet, there are many people who are literate in this restricted sense, but who nonetheless suffer serious problems with more complex reading and writing tasks. These are the "functionally illiterate". To be functionally literate a person must be able to "engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and the community's development". Note that functional literacy is a relative measure rather than an absolute one. The same skill level may result in one being considered functionally literate in one context and functionally illiterate in another. Also, "functional literacy" calls for a broader as well as a higher level of basic skills than does "literacy", embracing calculations as well as reading and writing. It is, in effect, a measure of one's capacity to cope with the educational challenges of a given environment. While there is a tendency to associate functional illiteracy with industrialized countries and "plain old illiteracy" with the developing countries, this is by no means accurate. There are many illiterates in industrialized countries and, alas, a rapidly growing number of functional illiterates in developing countries.

Yet, if we consider the matter more deeply, we are all illiterate in one way or another. We may know English, but not French or Fortran. We may be able to read a page from a novel with joy, but be left in puzzlement before one from a statistics book. We may understand a map of our local bus system, but be left bewildered by a diagram of the electrical circuits within our own home. A dichotomy - "literate" versus "illiterate" - does not suffice to deal with skill levels that run from zero to Shakespeare and vary from utter confusion in one sphere to easy mastery in another. Illiteracy is, thus, not a completely foreign concept to any of us. We have all tasted of it and know that the flavour runs from light and sparkling in small sips to downright bitter in deep draughts.

Remember under all these numbers are people!

Director-General for Education of Unesco, in an editorial on ILY. "It is not merely a technical skill, but, potentially, a cultural revolution. It provides a new way of looking at oneself and one's place in the world."

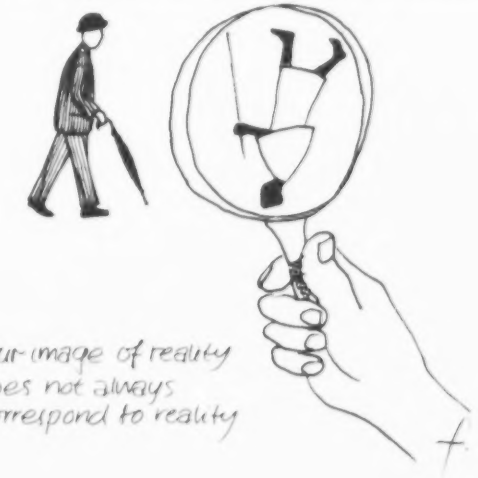
Despite large-scale campaigns in developing countries and compulsory schooling in the industrialized world, the absolute number of illiterates, propelled by rapid population growth, has, until very recently, constantly increased. Nor will time alone correct this problem. In the developing countries, as ILY begins, an estimated 130 million children of primary-school age are not enrolled in school; they are at risk of becoming the illiterate adults of the next century if immediate action is not taken.

Over 95 per cent of the illiterate live in the developing regions of the world, with Southern Asia (54 per cent) and Sub-Saharan Africa (53 per cent) having the highest rates, followed by the Arab States (49 per cent), Eastern Asia (24 per cent) and Latin America and the Caribbean (15 per cent). In absolute terms, the majority of adults who cannot read and write are in Asia, 671 million, with India and China alone accounting for more than half of the world's total. The situation of women is more serious than that of men. While about one-fifth of men cannot read or write, one-third of women are illiterate.

Illiteracy and functional illiteracy - i.e., reading and writing abilities inadequate to cope with everyday demands - are a continuing problem in industrialized nations as well, where between 5 and 20 per cent of adults have difficulties with the written word. Although common belief in industrialized nations classifies illiteracy as a relic of the past, it has become clear over the past twenty years that this indeed is not the case. One country after another is making the same disquieting discovery: illiteracy is alive and thriving. In 1974, British voluntary agencies, supported by the BBC, launched the "On the Move" programme, the response to which brought the extent of illiteracy in Great Britain into the light; Hunter and Harmon's *Adult Literacy in the United States* (1979) had a similar impact in making the problem known; a landmark French report in 1981 exposed a troubling problem of school

People Who Are Literate Can ...

* read the labels on cans and boxes of food
* read a bus or train schedule
* look up numbers in a telephone directory
* read a contract, a health insurance form, a deed, or a waiver
* read a map when they are lost
* read medical directions
* help their children with homework
* read the menu in a restaurant
* read road signs
* get a job requiring reading or writing
* read the warning labels on poisons and pesticides
* read a letter from a relative or friend and write a response
* keep their own accounts
* etc.



Our image of reality does not always correspond to reality

failure and illiteracy. Other national surveys have provided similar findings. Illiteracy is a particularly painful disability in an industrialized country where the written word plays a crucial role in all aspects of life. To be illiterate in a developing nation does not necessarily marginalize one; in an industrialized country, it almost certainly does so.

The illiterate and functionally illiterate in industrialized countries are a large, diverse segment of the population. Often difficult to identify, they include both the immigrant and the indigenous, the urban and the rural. In 1987, a survey undertaken by a Canadian newspaper chain, Southam Incorporated, indicated that out of nearly 26 million adults in Canada, 4.5 million were "functionally illiterate", i.e., lacking in reading and writing skills required to understand printed material used in everyday life. Illiteracy in industrialized countries often does not conform to our mental image of it. It is not always the immigrant or the nomad who is the illiterate; it may also be the man or the woman next door. The Southam survey turned up illiterates who conscientiously subscribed to newspapers to "camouflage" their condition. While the right to privacy is sacred, the difficulty in identifying illiterates and functional illiterates in industrialized societies complicates the problem of reaching and serving them.

Even where the problem of adult illiteracy is recognized, the provision made to remedy it is often inadequate. In the United States, for example, a report on "workforce literacy" in the South indicates that federally-funded adult basic education programmes reach only 5 per cent of the under-educated in that region. A comprehensive system for teaching under-educated adults will not evolve in the South or elsewhere, the report adds, "unless Congress reshapes the federal role in literacy and sets more specific goals for its literacy programmes."

A Summons to Action

It was against this background that Unesco in 1985 appealed to the United Nations for an international year to sensitize world public opinion to the need to extend literacy to all. In December 1987, the United Nations General Assembly recognized the importance of universal literacy and adopted a resolution proclaiming 1990 as International Literacy Year. ILY is intended to be a "summons to action", a means for informing the public, mobilizing resources and launching new educational initiatives that will endure not only through the Year, but throughout the decade.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community groups that have been operating literacy programmes at the grass-roots level

Teach the Mother and Reach the Child

"Each newborn infant begins life as an illiterate. If the child grows up without acquiring literacy, an adult illiterate appears. The long-term solution to the problem of adult illiteracy is, therefore, one of inculcating literacy in each new generation."

But it is not that simple as the education of children depends, in substantial measure, upon the education of their parents. There is a cycle. In the case of well-educated parents, a beneficent cycle; in the case of uneducated or ill-educated parents, a vicious one. In the latter case, the lack of education in the household implies that children will arrive at school ill-prepared and will receive little supplementary help or support from their parents. As a consequence, they will often fall behind, become frustrated and drop out of school: first emotionally and then physically.

How can society intervene to transform a vicious cyle into a beneficent one? A large body of research in both developed and developing nations suggests that the education of the mother is the key point of intervention. "The work of the educated mother to develop cognitive and language skills of pre-school children provides an advantage to children upon entry into school. But the influence of parents', and especially of mothers', education level does not end there. In fact, a well-educated mother is a form of continuous support for children's educational success".

"In short, for getting the most from scarce educational resources, a much larger commitment world-wide to education of girls and women would seem called for. With the money spent in educating women, we could teach the mother and reach the child".

Source: Citations are from Thomas G. Sticht and Barbara A. McDonald, *"Teach the mother and reach the child"*, in *Literacy Lessons*, IBE-Unesco, Geneva, 1990.

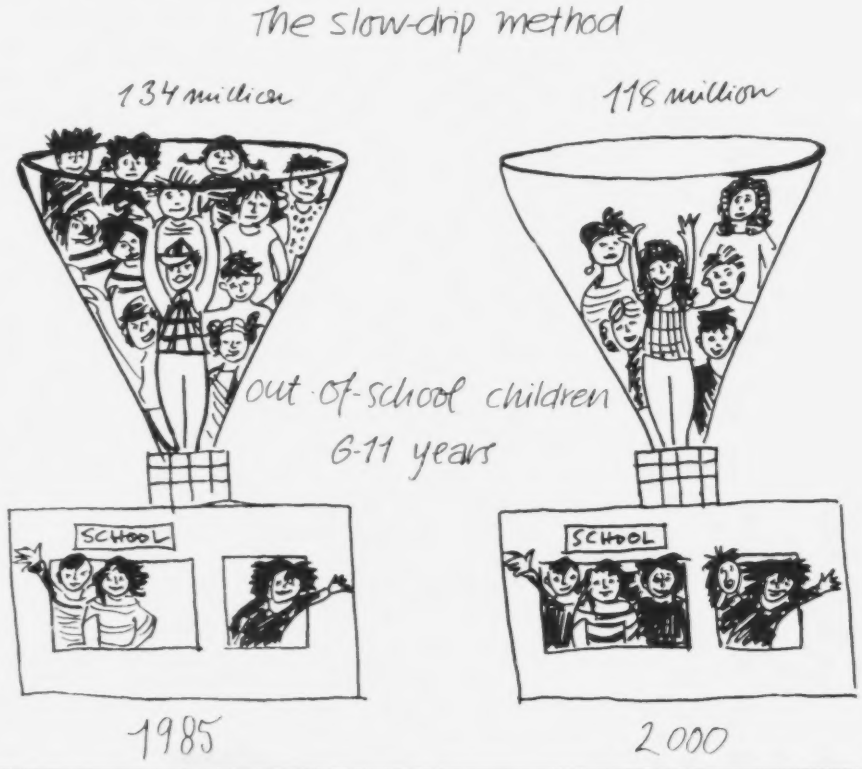
for decades were early and forceful proponents of an International Literacy Year. At the initiative of the International Council for Adult Education, headquartered in Toronto, Canada, more than thirty international and regional NGOs joined forces in 1987 to form the International Task Force on Literacy (ITFL).

Both Unesco and the ITFL envision ILY as the beginning of a ten-year worldwide effort to make serious inroads into reducing illiteracy by the year 2000, an ambitious goal that depends on long-term governmental commitments. Both formal and non-formal educational efforts, however, have been frequent targets for cutbacks during recent periods of economic austerity. A 1989 UNICEF report, "The State of the World's Children", signaled a decrease of up to 50 per cent per student in educational spending in the thirty-seven poorest nations of the world.

To counteract this situation, Unesco has launched a ten-year Plan of Action for literacy. The Plan is based upon existing regional programmes for literacy established by governments with the encouragement and assistance of Unesco during the past decade in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and the Arab States. Each programme is unique, suited to the particular circumstances and needs of the region it serves, but all focus upon offering primary education of improved quality to all children and increasing the number and relevance of literacy activities for out-of-school youth and adults. The global approach to literacy - i.e., education of both children and adults - which Unesco advo-

A School for Every Child: Alas, Not Yet

The Unesco Office of Statistics projects that primary enrolments will continue to grow, but at a rate which will only very gradually reduce the number of out-of-school children. As the diagram below reveals, in 1985 there were an estimated 134 million children in the 6 to 11 age- group in developing countries who were not enrolled in school. This number is expected to decline at the rate of about one million per year and to reach 118 million in the year 2000 unless urgent action is taken to accelerate progress. If we fail to act, the out-of-school children of today are destined to become the adult illiterates of the twenty-first century.



cates is supported by research findings as well as extensive experience. Indeed, there is evidence that the more closely the education of parents is linked to that of children, the more successful the outcome will be.

The Importance of Literacy: An Historical Perspective

Socrates espoused the idea that the rightlly trained mind would turn toward virtue. But access to training - and hence to virtue - was throughout much of history the privilege of an elite. The notion of literacy - the key to the knowledge-capital of a society - as a basic human right is a recent one. From the Renaissance onward, literacy was gradually removed from the realm of the sacred, from religion and law based on religion. The growth of commerce, industrialization, secularization and the birth of modern ideologies, all increased the demand for literacy and expanded its use in everyday life. The invention of the printing press, the development of high quality, inexpensive paper, and the use of spectacles provided a technological basis for wider literacy, while the use of vernacular languages, instead of Latin, stimulated its diffusion.

Paradoxically, the opening of schools serving a broad spectrum of the population often resulted in tightening restrictions on reading and writing as literacy was frequently viewed as a danger to the established order. During the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century, conservative forces saw the critical thinking and self-expression fostered by reading and writing as too hazardous to entrust to the working classes, while the latter mistrusted schools, perceiving them as a means for reinforcing the ruling order of society. By contrast, governments dedicated to modernization and centralization supported public education as an indispensable means to these ends. Thus, during the French Revolution, schools played a key role in fostering the idea of a centralized republic, as opposed to a monarchy under which regional differences thrived.

In the developing nations, the rapid expansion of schooling dates from the post-colonial era, a period of less than twenty-five years in many countries. Access to reading remains primarily the privilege of a male public, with women often taught only minimal literacy skills (the importance of women in development is only now being recognized by development-assistance programmes). High rates of illiteracy prevail in urban slums and remote rural areas. Poverty leaves the illiterate of Africa, Asia or Latin America no more motivated to attend classes than it did the impoverished farmers or workers of nineteenth-century Europe.

The notion of universal literacy is a relatively recent one which no nation has, as yet, achieved. The first attempt at promoting literacy on a mass scale in the twentieth century was as an integral part of the revolution in the Soviet Union. "An illiterate person," Lenin said, "is outside politics and has to be taught his ABCs. Without this there can be no politics." Despite the monumental task of reconciling rural and urban differences, workers and peasants, and teaching in over a hundred tongues, Lenin launched a nation-wide literacy campaign in 1917. The mass campaign, begun when 70 per cent of the population was illiterate, was pursued as a means for building a scientific, techni-

The Consequences of Literacy in Zimbabwe

The consequences of literacy have been remarkable. Without a single exception, the 146 adult learners interviewed, both men and women, the quite young and the very old, claimed that literacy had improved their lives, irrespective of the level of literacy attained and the subsequent contexture of its use. Learners' minds "opened up" and they could "do things without help". "Everything improved"; "everything became up-to-date".

A surge of confidence in oneself was universal and seemed to be intoxicating. Learners had indeed emerged from "a culture of silence". They had found their voices and their voices were often poignant. The learners said that they felt free, unafraid, not shy, not inferior. They felt transformed. If not a "new technology of intellect", there certainly was a new "social reinvention of oneself". Literacy had become the great equalizer of men and women.

Source: field notes of H. S. Bhola, rural Zimbabwe, 1989.

cal and cultural future for the country. By 1939, an estimated 93.5 per cent of men and 81.6 per cent of women were classified as literate. The Soviet mass-campaign model has been adopted by many developing countries including China, Cuba, Vietnam, Nicaragua and Ethiopia.

Worldwide literacy efforts are a post-Second World War phenomenon in the promotion of which Unesco has played a leading role. The terminology and approaches have varied from decade to decade - from community development and fundamental education in the 1950s, to functional or work-oriented literacy in the 1960s, to campaign approaches in the 1970s, and a global strategy in the 1980s -, but the attention and importance given to literacy have been continuous. Unesco emphasizes both the importance of political will - that is, the responsibility of the State to ensure the education of its citizens - and the need to create conditions of freedom and opportunity which provide incentives for literacy.

Literacy and Development

"If we want the people of the world to be self-sufficient in food production and other essential human needs, they must have the right to learn. If women and men are to enjoy better health, they must have the right to learn." This excerpt from the 1985 Declaration of the Fourth International Conference on Adult Education emphasizes the link between literacy and survival. But development extends beyond the fact of being to the quality of one's existence.

The Brazilian sociologist, Paulo Freire, popularized the concept of literacy education as a process leading to greater freedom and independent decision-making. His teaching method relies upon informal interaction through dialogue among illiterate adults; he views reading and writing as being instrumental to expressing one's identity, affecting one's environment and setting in motion a process of change. According to Freire, the illiterate is part of a "culture of

The Non-literate Survive... But Do They?

"... the non-literate 'survive'. They are born. They grow up. They play. They sing. They marry. They buy and sell. They build huts and homes. They make beautiful artifacts. They have children and grandchildren. They develop deep understandings of life. Some lead and govern their peoples in localities and communities. But it is impossible to deny that at this point in human history, they are clearly, and unquestionably, disadvantaged in relation to the other two-and-a-half billion adults who can read and write, and, therefore, have available to them the world of print from which the non-literate are excluded. The illiterate, thereby, are excluded and marginalized as they are disallowed from joining to define their own world and from contributing to collective knowledge, to history, and to culture."

Source:H. S. Bhola, *"Literacy and Survival"*, in *Literacy Lessons*, IBE-Unesco, Geneva, 1990.

Jamaica: An Exemplary Effort in Peril

The Jamaican Movement for the Advancement of Literacy (JAMAL), established in 1972, tackled literacy on all fronts: assuring regular school attendance of children, giving occupational skills to non-literates over 15 years old, and providing follow-up literature for new literates to prevent relapse into illiteracy. Through these efforts, the illiteracy rate was brought down from between 40 and 50 per cent in 1970 to 18 per cent in 1978.

From its headquarters in Kingston and through fourteen parish offices, JAMAL has set up literacy classes all over the islands. They take place primarily in the evening and are taught by volunteer teachers who receive a small incentive. Adult education centres offer day classes catering especially to the 15 to 25 age-group. Emphasis is placed on training in basic occupational skills geared to labourmarket demand in the students' home district. Around 70 per cent of the 1,200 persons who followed skill training have found employment. Training has been provided in such skill areas as auto-mechanics, sewing, agriculture, plumbing and embroidery. Within school, a compulsory education programme is conducted to prevent drop-out and ensure regular attendance, especially in the 6 to 12 age-group.

In Jamaica, as in many developing countries, recent budget cutbacks have led to a reduction of resources: in the case of JAMAL, from $8.6 million in 1982/83 to $4.3 million in 1988/89. The full-time staff has been reduced from 816 in 1983 to the current 117 and JAMAL's goal of achieving "literacy for all by the year 2000" is slipping beyond reach.

silence", and this culture is also one of degradation and poverty.

Although strategies for boosting literacy in developing nations have been less than adequately funded, their achievements have often proven significant. In one successful approach, Tanzania identified literacy as an integral component of social and political development, weaving it into the country's vision of the future. Literacy efforts combined both mass and selective approaches, and linked education to increased self-reliance, better living standards and greater political participation.

Experience demonstrates that agricultural production can rise by as much as 25 per cent when poor farmers receive even as few as four years of schooling; greater success in family planning has been correlated with higher educational levels, even when income differences are accounted for; infant mortality and malnutrition are significantly lower in cases where mothers have completed primary education. In Sri Lanka, for example, literacy of women has been closely linked to better health practices, and infant mortality is lowest in areas where literacy rates are highest.

Revolutionary Acts

The implementation of writing systems, and, by extension, the diffusion of literacy, are "revolutionary" rather than narrowly technical acts. They succeed or fail on the basis of the success of larger revolutions with which they are associated: revolutions in the production and consumption of economic goods and revolutions in the distribution of power and influence.

Source: J. Fishman, quoted in T.P. Gorman, *Language and Literacy: Current Issues and Research*, Tehran, International Institute for Adult Literacy Methods, 1977.

Despite this knowledge, however, the situation in developing countries is alarming. Against a backdrop of world recession, indebtedness and falling commodity prices, access to education is being steadily eroded. This deterioration follows a period of rapid progress in education during the 1960s and 1970s. A trend of favouring higher education over primary schooling in the allocation of resources is apparent in many developing countries. According to one study, expenditures per primary-school pupil fell, often steeply, from 1981 to 1985 in twenty-one out of the thirty-three countries surveyed. In the developing world as a whole, over 50 per cent of government expenditure on education is devoted to secondary schools, thus benefiting only one-third of the population. According to a World Bank study, "There is evidence, deriving from the effect of schooling on earnings and productivity, that in many countries the average dollar invested in primary education returns twice as much as one invested in higher education ... Yet governments in these countries heavily subsidize higher education at the expense of primary education". Nobody questions the importance of higher education for developing countries. Independent nations need to have trained civil servants and technical specialists. But the priority of priorities must be to provide basic education and literacy for all at the earliest possible moment.

Another major problem to be addressed is the high rate of illiteracy among women and girls in developing nations and its implications for the educational attitudes and welfare of the family. From the origins of the written word, sexism has acted as a major deterrent to educating women. "Teach a woman letters? A terrible mistake: like feeding extra venom to a horrifying snake", wrote the Greek playwright Menander in the fourth century B.C.

Over 60 per cent of the world's illiterates are women. In 1985, fourteen nations - ten in Africa and four in Asia - had an illiteracy rate for women in excess of 80 per cent. While approximately one out of every five men in the world cannot read and write, one out of every three women is illiterate. A semi-literate Zapotec Indian woman from Latin America wrote : "I would educate women more than men. Women bear and raise children. So, women prepare the future. How can the future be good if women are illiterate?"

Viewed as an international problem, illiteracy is often perceived as a lesser evil. Whereas disease and famine kill quickly and directly, the damage of illiteracy is gradual and indirect. Its impact is measured not by what it does, but by what it prevents from being done. Illiteracy

Mission Impossible

The theoretical case for providing more and better education to women and girls is impeccable. Realizing this objective, however, is often a practical impossibility under present conditions. Studies show that women in many developing countries are engaged from twelve to eighteen hours a day, every day of the week, in work to ensure the survival and well-being of their families. They must prepare meals and care for children, walk miles to find and carry back fire wood and still more miles to get water. In certain parts of the world, women play the main role in growing food as well as in selling or trading it for other needed items. A woman's workday usually begins before dawn and ends long after sunset.

A womans lot Mission impossible

Under these circumstances, how will it be possible for women to attend literacy or other classes, even if their husbands allow them to do so, which is not always the case? And while they are in class, who will attend to their children? These are the difficult issues with which those who wish to organize literacy programmes for women must grapple. It is evident, moreover, that these are not problems that "outsiders" can solve for "insiders". The solutions have to come from within a community. The role of the "outsider" is to listen and help to expand the range of possibilities. A village well or a solar cooking stove may, for example, do as much to facilitate literacy in a rural community as a library, and the provision of child care may do more to prompt enrolment and participation than any number of motivational lectures. Experience proves that rural women in all parts of the world desire and seek education. But for them, as for all of us, survival has to come first. As long as the lot of women is "mission impossible", the prospects for spreading education and literacy will remain bleak.

will not kill, but it may prevent people from earning their living or protecting their health.

The absence of visible crisis, however, does not remove the need for policy. In a crisis, people must be given what they need - food, water, medicine, clothing and shelter. But within a policy framework, literacy must be central to all developmental initiatives if people are to acquire independence in learning,seeking information, making choices and acting on their own futures. Thus, literacy is not only a human right but a development imperative. Literacy is important not only because illiteracy is part of the syndrome of underdevelopment, but also - and mainly - because it provides a way of liberating and mobilizing minds to combat poverty, deprivation and injustice.

The Road to Jomtien and Beyond

International Literacy Year is part of a broad international movement to promote literacy as an essential condition for development. The Plan of Action, which will guide Unesco's programme in the field of literacy during the period 1990-1999, identifies four areas for attention:

(1) alerting world public opinion to the magnitude and implications of illiteracy;

(2) rallying the international community to support literacy by according it increased priority and resources;

(3) pursuing the regional programmes for literacy which have been established in all developing regions;

(4) increasing technical co-operation to and among governments, especially through an increased flow of information and documentation and enhanced support for the training of national specialists.

ILY is intended to serve the first objective: making the problem of illiteracy known and stressing the importance of education as a human right and a development prerequisite. The World Conference on Education for All, which took place in Jomtien, Thailand, from 5

to 9 March 1990, had as its main purpose rallying the international community around the cause of literacy (see box). As the Director-General of Unesco noted, the Conference and, more particularly, its follow-up "will open a new chapter in North-South co-operation in the field of education." UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank have joined with Unesco in sponsoring this Conference. One of the key messages from Jomtien was that literacy is not only an educational issue, but a societal problem which can only be resolved with the commitment and involvement of all sectors of society. But what matters is less what happened on the way to Jomtien or even at the Conference, than what awaits us on the "road beyond Jomtien". If the Conference has persuaded governments to accord a higher priority to education and convinced international organizations and aid agencies to invest more thought and money in developing the knowledge and know-how of women and men and preparing girls and boys to confront the future, then it will have marked a decisive turning point in the quest to achieve a literate world.

Structures for increasing international co-operation in education are already in place in all developing regions: these are the regional programmes for literacy (see box). As already noted, each programme has its own objectives, modes of operation and structures, but all are based upon a global approach to promoting literacy through (1) the extension to all children of primary education of adequate duration and quality to instill a lasting literacy, and (2) the promotion of out-of-school education to serve youth and adults having missed their turn in school or requiring post-literacy training. Increasingly, Unesco extends its co-operation to Member States through these regional programmes, using the Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries (TCDC) concept as a means of ensuring the relevance of the support provided to programmes and institutions in Member States. In brief, the pieces are in place. What is needed is a strengthening of resolve and, in the least developed countries, a

World Conference on Education for All: Not "Just Another Meeting"...

The World Conference, which will take place in Jomtien, Thailand, from 5 to 9 March 1990, is not just another meeting of and for educators. It brings together government leaders in finance and planning, information and health, labour and education, together with NGOs, leaders from the world of the media, communication and the private sector, bilateral and international organizations - in fact, all the key players who can influence the direction of basic education. These key people are coming together to forge new partnerships and make new commitments to achieve education for all in the next decade. Nine regional consultations have already been held to begin the process of mobilizing world support for the initiative.

This co-operative spirit is symbolized by a union of four United Nations Agencies, combining forces for education: Unesco, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank. Equally important is the fact that this initiative is already receiving material and financial support from eighteen partners - governments, international, regional and non-governmental organizations who share a vision of education for all.

The Conference is expected to adopt a World Declaration on Education for All and a Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs in the 1990s. New initiatives, new ways of organizing to achieve education for all, and successful experiments from all over the world, will also be the subject of round-table discussions and exhibits at the Conference.

The World Declaration will call for an expanded vision of basic education, which ensures access for all, which focuses on reducing disparities between population groups, and which is appropriate to the learning needs of the individual and of society. It will urge the use of all available channels of communication, and the development of new partnerships which go beyond present institutional structures and conventional education delivery systems, to enable basic skills and knowledge to reach even the most inaccessible populations. Finally, it will call for reinforced international co-operation to ensure that education for all can be attained in the foreseeable future.

Source: adapted from a United Nations press release.
Issued on the eve of the Conference

sizeable increase in the financial and material resources provided through international co-operation.

The promotion of literacy has, of course, never been the exclusive prerogative of governments. Non-governmental organizations have always played a role in literacy, often reinforcing and multiplying the impact of government efforts. The roles of NGOs are numerous. Advocacy may be critical in situations - both in the industrialized and developing nations - where it is necessary to spark and strengthen the national political will for literacy. In developing countries, NGOs may work to make literacy an integral component of development programmes, along with nutrition, health and other life-improvement knowledge. Governments may find it useful to adapt and re-organize their own programmes to facilitate co-operation with NGOs. Some development institutions, for example, may need to decentralize decision-making in order to form more fruitful alliances with groups working at the grass-roots. Experimentation and pilot activities are appropriate NGO activities where there is a political will that is not matched by technical experience and expertise. Where major governmental initiatives exist, NGOs with a history of involvement at the local level can play a vital role in supporting those actions and ensuring that follow-up plans are put into place.

Numerous NGOs have had a long involvement in literacy work. A recent development growing out of the Collective Consultation of NGOs on Literacy is that NGOs are increasingly working in partnership. The Toronto-based International Task Force on Literacy (ITFL) referred-to above, which grew out of the Collective Consultation, represents a private voluntary effort initiated by the International Council for Adult Education to bring NGOs together to mobilize for ILY. The more than thirty members of the ITFL make up a cross-section of international NGOs engaged in or concerned about the promotion of literacy. The coalition has drawn up a four-pronged programme of activities: to arouse public awareness, to strengthen and create literacy structures, to stimulate the "great debate" on literacy, and to encourage research and evaluation on the topic. "We envision," stated an ITFL spokesperson, "a Year which will mark the beginning of a ten-year effort to dramatically reduce illiteracy in the world, mobilize resources from the grass-roots and factory floors through governments and educational institutions, and link literacy to the achievement of social, economic and political democracy."

The Last Link

On 19 February 1989, the Director-General of Unesco launched the Regional Programme for the Universalization and Renewal of Primary Education and Eradication of Illiteracy in the Arab States. With this action, the network of Unesco regional literacy programmes was completed. There are now programmes in all the major developing regions. The Major Project in the Field of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean was established in 1981; the Regional Programme for the Eradication of Illiteracy in Africa was launched in 1984; and the Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL) was set up in 1987. In addition, a network for exchange of information on illiteracy and functional illiteracy in industrialized countries is based at the Unesco Institute for Education in Hamburg (Federal Republic of Germany).

The media, too, "have been playing a central role in the literacy situation in our countries and can play a still more central role", noted Jim Duffy, President of Capital Cities ABC Television in the United States, at a Media Colloquium on literacy which took place at Unesco in May 1989. "The media can be a facilitator, a unifier, or can bring awareness of the scale and seriousness of the problem. Perhaps most importantly, the media can join in a call for action."

Summing up the Situation

Illiteracy remains an immense global problem directly affecting nearly a thousand million adults and indirectly affecting us all. In an increasingly interdependent world, there is an evident and urgent need to be able to communicate with all national communities, and all sectors and sections within them, if we are to agree upon means for confronting global problems concerning health, environment, resource

OBJECTIVES OF ILY

The objectives for International Literacy Year approved by the twenty-fourth session of the Unesco General Conference in the autumn of 1987 are:

(1) increasing action by the governments of Member States afflicted by illiteracy or functional illiteracy to eliminate these problems, particularly through education in rural areas and urban slums, in favour of women and girls and among populations and groups having special educational problems or needs;

(2) increasing public awareness of the scope, nature and implications of illiteracy as well as of the means and conditions for combating it. In particular, an effort should be made to alert public opinion to the rate of illiteracy among adult women and its implications for the well-being of their children, the lower rate of school participation among girls than among boys and the association between illiteracy, on the one hand, and poverty, under-development and economic, social and cultural exclusion on the other;

(3) increasing popular participation, within and among countries, in efforts to combat illiteracy, particularly through activities of governmental and non-governmental organizations, voluntary associations and community groups.

(4) increasing the co-operation and solidarity among Member States in the struggle against illiteracy;

(5) increasing co-operation within the United Nations system and, more generally, among all intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in the struggle against illiteracy;

(6) using International Literacy Year for launching the Plan of Action for the eradication of illiteracy by the year 2000 and for addressing issues of critical importance to the progress of literacy such as reducing primary-school drop-out and establishing post-literacy programmes to prevent relapse into illiteracy.

use, immigration and many other issues. Fortunately, the importance of literacy is well recognized and initiatives of many kinds and on many scales are being taken to promote it: action by the United Nations system - and especially by Unesco -, by governments at all levels, by NGOs and by the media to mention only a few of the most prominent partners in this global movement.

The basic structures required to substantially reduce illiteracy in the world by the year 2000 are often in place, even where the distance to reaching this goal is the greatest. What is all too often not present are the means to extend these structures effectively to the remotest rural populations, the most needy urban slums, to women and girls, and to the most marginalized - refugees, migrant workers and the handicapped. It is through concerted co-operation among individuals, community groups, NGOs, the private sector, governments, and international agencies that new alliances can form and existing ones can be strengthened to most effectively extend literacy opportunities to all. And behind all of these undertakings are dedicated women and men of good will who recognize that "education for all" is not only an appealing idea, but also - and increasingly - an urgent need if we are to live together in harmony and security in the global village that Mother Earth has become in this century.

❐

A Season of Hope and Promise

The timing of International Literacy Year (ILY) is auspicious. As I write this, in the final days of 1989, it is evident that our world is undergoing a rapid and fundamental transformation. The East-West conflict, which has conditioned international relations for more than four decades, appears to be drawing to a close. This is a momentous development, filled with hope and promise. It is not only that the grave threat of nuclear war - indeed, of annihilation - under which we have lived for so long is receding, but also that, gradually, a culture of conflict is yielding place to a culture of peace. The logic inherent in situations of conflict is that of the zero-sum game: the advantage of one protagonist is, by definition, the disadvantage of the other. By contrast, in a culture of peace, there is a perceived mutuality of interest and a sense of common responsibility. Such changes in mentality - in outlook and expectation - are the invisible forces which transform the practice of international relations and ultimately change the course of history. We may not, as yet, be at the point of beating swords into ploughshares, but we are moving swiftly in that promising direction. It is this profound change in the international context which gives special meaning and importance to International Literacy Year. For there is now a real hope that priorities will change, that attention, resources and vision will be focused upon meeting the urgent and basic needs of humanity. This would, indeed, be a precious "peace dividend". And, of all the places where we might invest it, none would yield a higher or more certain return than education. Thus, ILY is timely - it arrives at a moment of great hope and unique opportunity. If we have the courage and the vision to seize this historic opportunity, 1990 could mark the dawn of a new era as well as the beginning of a new decade.

Source: Federico Mayor, *"International Literacy Year - Opportunity and Challenge"*, in *Literacy Lessons*, IBE-Unesco, Geneva, 1990.

A Message from Ulan Bator

Illiteracy is one of the urgent global problems facing humanity and its eradication one of the major challenges which the world community must address and resolve in the final decade of the twentieth century. All nations and peoples are affected, either directly or indirectly, by this problem. Its gravity is such that efforts to overcome it must transcend geographical, ideological, political and economic differences. Illiteracy is a menace to the progress and well-being of humanity; its eradication must be the common goal of all States and peoples ...

The promotion of literacy is inseparably linked to the pursuit of peace and progress. Tensions and strife - either within nations or between them - distract attention and divert resources from constructive to destructive purposes. Similarly, conditions of economic instability channel investments into emergency needs or areas with quick pay-offs and away from longer-term social investments, such as education, upon which the future of developing nations ultimately depends. International Literacy Year should invite statesmen and the public-at-large to reflect upon these issues. Above all, it should serve the cause of peace and progress by providing an example of fruitful co-operation among all nations and peoples in pursuit of a common cause: the quest for a literate world.

Source: Excerpts from the *"Statement of Ulan Bator"*, adopted by the International Symposium for the Preparation of International Literacy Year held in Ulan Bator, Mongolia, from 24 to 28 May 1987 at the invitation of the Government.

The Book Voyage, a project of the International Task Force on Literacy (ITFL), involves a book or series of books travelling from literacy centre to literacy centre, from village to village, and from country to country around the world during International Literacy Year, 1990. Newly literate people are inscribing their messages into the books in their own languages.

The purposes of The Book Voyage are:

1. Involving learners themselves in International Literacy Year.
2. Raising public awareness.
3. Building bridges between learners in industrialized and non-industrialized countries.

...Not Empty Pitchers

A woman about to begin a Unesco-assisted literacy course remarked: "We are not empty pitchers. We have minds of our own. We can reason out things. And, believe it or not, we have dignity. Let those who will teach us remember this."

The woman's point is well taken. There is an ever-present danger that the struggle against illiteracy may be perverted into a struggle agairst illiterates rather than a struggle with and for them. Illiterates, indeed, are often the poor, the deprived and the exploited of the earth. But illiteracy should not be confused with ignorance or incompeterce - it is usually accounted for by lack of opportunity alone. In the developing nations, it is the skills of the illiterates that provide food, clothing and shelter for the vast majority of the population. In the industrialized countries, the illiterates are often forced, by the lack of other employment, into those jobs nobody else is prepared to do: work which is exhausting, repetitive and menial as well as essential to the comfort, convenience and safety of society. Illiterates pay their dues to society, but are often denied the benefits of membership.

No, illiterates are not "empty pitchers"; they are usually competent, responsible, hard-working citizens who, to their misfortune, have not mastered the skills of reading and writing.

Schools in the Snows

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Preamble

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world ...

Article 26

1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory ...

2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace ...

Schools in the Sands

There are books ... which take rank in our life with parents and lovers and passionate experiences.

Emerson

Books are bridges between generations. They express our common hopes and fears, our joys and sorrows. They speak of yesterday and of tomorrow, of places near and far. They teach us about others, and, above all, about ourselves. Books bind us together. They reflect our heritage and inspire our future.

Promoting the education of women and girls must be a priority objective of International Literacy Year: justice and equity demand it, economic considerations support it and the future requires it ...

Excerpted from "The Statement of Ulan Bator"

TOWARDS A SOLUTION

The main purpose of this publication is to provide a series of suggestions through which action in the field of literacy could be strengthened. Not all would be effective at every level, nor in every venue. Moreover, these suggestions are illustrative not exhaustive. Nonetheless, all have been successfully implemented in some venue, and all or parts of most could be adapted in some form for use in other places and under different circumstances. This section describes activities which can be carried out at home, at school, in the community, by NGOs, within the private sector, by mass media, by governments and by intergovernmental organizations. In all cases, the emphasis is upon what you can do.

At Home

Through their families, individuals can promote literacy at home, where it begins, by creating an environment which promotes, demonstrates and rewards literacy, and by engaging in activities, such as story-telling, which develop language and love of language and teach vocabulary and cultural knowledge. Activities in the home might include:

* keeping and using printed materials such as calendars, posters, bus or train schedules, newspapers, magazines, books, lists, accounts, letters, religious materials;

* encouraging and helping a child to set up a personal library of school materials, religious training materials, children's magazines and books;

* providing opportunities for children to see their parents and older brothers and sisters reading for work-related, educational and recreational purposes; young children love to emulate their elders;

* exchanging letters with friends and relatives, and reading them aloud;

* reading books aloud to one another (make it a

Planting the Seeds of Reading

If storytelling is at the heart of many family and village rituals in Africa, the art is most often oral. Few books are available in local languages, and books and reading are most often the preserve of an educated minority.

Ellen Waungana and Anna Pupawaenda, two women in Harare, believe in "planting the seeds of reading at an early age". In Ellen's home, a movement to encourage children to read and appreciate their own culture was born. Over the past decade, it has steadily grown, and now comprises six home libraries in the Harare area.

The mother, or another member of the family, serves as storyteller and librarian. In this environment, the child is introduced to the habit of reading for pleasure and using the library for information. The libraries serve to encourage creativity in children by giving them a chance to invent and tell stories, and to motivate parents and the community to teach their children the importance of storytelling and reading books from an early age. For the newly-literate adults, the presence of libraries is an encouragement to use and maintain their skills by reading to children.

The cost of running a home library is modest but promoters consider it essential for the librarians to receive a small salary, thus ensuring regularity, seriousness and professionalism. The ultimate aim is to organize a network of home libraries throughout the country, especially in rural areas.

To Keep Young People Reading

* surround them with materials within their spectrum of reading;

* ensure that they read within a supportive, non-threatening situation;

* give them time to read;

* make it possible for them to share their reading experience;

* make sure that subject-matter is readily available.

Source: G. Robert Carlson, "Books and the Teenage Reader", quoted in Ralph C. Staiger, *"Developing the Reading Habit in Children"*, *Literacy Lessons*, IBE-Unesco, Geneva, 1990.

pleasure, not a lesson; avoid constantly correcting the reader);

* discussing books, stories and newspaper articles read by family members;

* offering books and magazine subscriptions as gifts;

* encouraging children, when a mobile or local library is available, to obtain a library card; go there as a family, make it a regular and pleasurable outing;

* helping a child compile and illustrate a simple book or story;

* re-reading a book or story you enjoyed as a child, and then sharing it with a child;

* visiting a nearby literary landmark (the home of a writer, for example);

* setting aside time for reading, but never using reading as a punishment;

* using radio and television to encourage reading and writing (for example, first reading a book and then watching a film based on it on television);

* playing word games, such as Bingo and Scrabble;

* setting family reading goals;

* encouraging your child to write notes and letters to relatives and friends, stories, a diary or a journal;

* planning a vacation reading programme;

* packing books or magazines for family trips;

* reading together about travel destinations, including bus and train schedules;

Books in Young Lives

As a contribution to International Literacy Year, the Asian Cultural Centre for Unesco (ACCU) in Tokyo, Japan, is publishing in co-operation with the International Literacy Year Secretariat a picture book for young children: "Guess What I'm Doing!".

Editions in the vernacular languages of developing countries will be produced with the support of foundations. For additional information please contact: -> -> ->

Asian Cultural Centre for Unesco No. 6 Shinjuku-ku Tokyo, 162 Japan

* visiting a bookstore with a child;

* organizing inter-generational literacy events, such as story-reading between children and their grandparents or other extended family members;

* providing opportunities for both father and mother to read to children in the family.

Remember: literacy takes root in the home. No contributions to literacy are more valuable than those you can make in your own household. Literate nations are made up of literate families. In 1994, when the world will observe the International Year of the Family, recently proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly, it can be expected that a strong stress will be placed upon educational activities in the home, thus re-emphasizing one of the main concerns of ILY.

At School

Providing instruction in reading and writing is obviously a major charge of the school. But beyond meeting this fundamental responsibility, there are many other actions supportive of ILY in which schools, their students and their faculties, could become involved. There are also literacy-related activities within the school in which community volunteers could play an active role. These actions could take place in primary and secondary schools, literacy centres, adult education centres, teacher- training institutions, and universities.

Primary and secondary students could:

* recognize and honour teachers and literacy workers on a day such as "El Dia del Maestro", which is celebrated annually in May in Latin America;

* become involved in twinning programmes with schools in other countries through the Unesco Associated Schools Project and Unesco Clubs, and work together on literacy-related activities;

Honour Thy Teacher

A central message of ILY is that literacy is the concern and responsibility of everyone. But the Year presents a special occasion to recognize, reward and honour those who are serving in the *"frontlines"* in the struggle for literacy: teachers and literacy instructors. Where teachers are respected, education flourishes.

The teaching profession has always been demanding. Willard Waller in *The Sociology of Teaching* identifies the teacher as a "martyr to cultural diffusion", hired "to carry light into dark places". But the last decades have posed many new challenges and difficulties. In the developing nations, the conditions of service have seriously deteriorated. Inflation has eroded the buying power of meager salaries and economic crisis has, in some cases, meant that even these are not paid regularly. Classes are overcrowded, sometimes with 80 to 100 students, buildings and furniture are in disrepair and books and teaching materials in extremely short supply. In the industrialized countries the situation, although different, is far from being satisfactory. Teachers' salaries lag behind those of other professions and in urban schools the work is often difficult and not infrequently dangerous. But the cruelest blow of all is the lack of prestige and respect teachers suffer in many societies.

International Literacy Year is an occasion to recognize and act to correct this situation. In many cases, improved conditions of service are essential to recruit and motivate able teachers. Under all circumstances, greater recognition and appreciation of the vital role teachers play in shaping the world of tomorrow would be a just and fitting tribute.

* volunteer as readers for the elderly, the blind, the handicapped, gaining useful reading practice and providing a beneficial service for those being read to.

University students could:

* volunteer their services as tutors or instructors in literacy programmes;

* examine literacy issues in courses and extra-curricular activities;

* make literacy issues the subject of papers, theses, dissertations, and other research.

Teachers could:

* volunteer as literacy workers, tutors or instructors in evening or week-end literacy programmes;

* offer volunteer technical support and staff-development services to literacy programmes;

* become involved in literacy activities through teachers' associations and voluntary organizations.

Community volunteers could:

* assist teachers by reading to children or listening to children read to them; telling or listening to stories; in many communities, elderly residents serve as foster grandparents and work with children in classrooms.

The faculties of universities and teacher-training institutions could:

* offer volunteer services to literacy programmes, e.g. in the areas of evaluation and research, methodology, development of materials, staff training, or in special fields, such as teaching the handicapped;

* encourage students to conduct research and write papers, theses and dissertations on literacy-related issues.

Schools, in brief, should both serve their communities and draw sustenance from them. The community should be welcome to come into the school to help - to give personal assistance to students with reading and writing difficulties or simply to read to them or listen to them read - and the school, its students and its faculty, should go out into the community to assist in teaching and, what is equally important, in fostering an environment conducive to learning by, for example, voluntary work in libraries. The community must support its school and the school, in turn, must promote learning within the community. If ILY can serve to strengthen the links between the school and the community, it will make a lasting contribution to ensuring one of the essential conditions for the long-term success of educational efforts.

In the Community

Community groups are increasingly engaged in promoting projects for local improvement and development. Literacy is an important factor in development. It enables people to understand issues and contribute to solving problems, while development, in turn, opens opportunities which increase the motivation for literacy. It is, therefore, not surprising that more and more community groups are engaged in literacy activities.

Community groups could:

* publicize basic facts and figures about literacy and illiteracy in the community; comparisons with other communities or other parts of the country or the world are often of particular interest;

* make known the plight of vulnerable groups - women, the poorest of the poor, the disabled, etc. - and stress the link between illiteracy and the particular problems with which such groups are confronted;

* sponsor awards and prizes for literacy work by both learners and instructors as a way of marking ILY in the community; prizes need not be costly - they can be mere tokens;what is important is to show the community's esteem for literacy and those engaged in its promotion;

Magna Cum Laude

Since 1964, the Department of Adult Education of Nigeria's oldest university, the University of Ibadan, has been at the forefront of the country's literacy initiatives. From training personnel to participating in literacy programmes and publishing instructional materials, the Department has combined theory and practice and demonstrated an on-going commitment to professionalism in the literacy field. It has established itself as a dynamic, inventive model for literacy education in a large and complex nation.

Fingers That Read

Literacy for the blind raises an important challenge for International Literacy Year. Eighty per cent of the 50 million blind persons in the world live in developing countries, where a lack of resources, not blindness, prevents their access to the written word.

In 1825, Louis Braille, a young Frenchman, invented a system based on raised dots to enable the blind to read. By the end of the nineteenth century, the system had spread from Europe to Latin America and Asia. With Unesco support, the adaptation of Braille writing to many languages has been undertaken. Yet, despite rapid advances in the technology for producing materials in Braille, most of the blind persons in the world still lack access to literacy and, through literacy, to knowledge. Action is needed to correct this situation.

* encourage artists, writers, media personalities and prominent public figures to promote literacy through newspaper articles and editorials or televised public-service announcements or features; literacy organizations and schools must also do their share by making information available and providing spokespersons for interviews in the press or appearances on radio and television;

* hold open houses at literacy centres, parent-teacher associations, student organizations, libraries, etc.; such open houses are particularly effective when they feature exhibits on local literacy activities;

* inform the public about how to contribute to literacy programmes in developing countries through NGOs or through Unesco; the community might, for example, participate in raising funds for specific projects in developing countries, such as building or repairing classrooms, providing school textbooks or equipment, etc.;

* heighten awareness of literacy issues through display of the ILY logo, or by posters, slogans, T-shirts, billboards, etc.;

* sponsor school and library activities for ILY such as "literacy festivals" or "authors' fairs" where children can meet and talk to writers;

* urge mayors or legislators to proclaim special literacy days, weeks, months or years, such as a "Young Reader Day" or a "I Love to Read Month";

* hold "read-a-thons" or "read-ins" at community centres, bazaars, shopping centres, places of worship, etc.;

* identify and recognize literacy-related landmarks, for example the home of a local author, the site of the first library or school in the community;

* produce a calendar of community reading and literary events;

* work in support of literacy or reading programmes for the blind or the handicapped; for example, establish Braille corners in public libraries, purchase large-print books for the visually handicapped, arrange services for the delivery of books and reading materials to shut-ins;

* above all else, draw upon your imagination and that of your friends and neighbours to conceive and carry out activities more appropriate to the circumstances of your community than anything suggested here.

The purpose of all these activities is to demonstrate that the community supports literacy efforts and honours those who are conducting them. The above suggestions are by no means exhaustive. Indeed, in nearly every action by every organization within a community, there is a way of showing that learning is revered and knowledge prized. If the struggle for literacy begins in the home and continues in the school, it draws indispensable support and inspiration from the community. Communities which value learning foster educated homes and effective schools.

Within the NGO Community

NGOs are playing a major role to ensure that ILY is a year of action. Activities in which

NGOs might engage - and in which many are now engaging - are reviewed in *"A Practical Guide For Non-Governmental Organizations, Unesco Clubs, Associated Schools and Other Interested Groups"* for ILY, published by the Unesco NGO Standing Committee. This Guide, which is available in limited supplies in English, French and Spanish editions, may be ordered from the ILY Secretariat. The criteria for the choice of activities suggested in the Guide are that they should be "tangible, modest and realistic, taking full account of the resource constraints now faced by most groups. Most of the activities are, therefore, relatively: inexpensive (often requiring a re-ordering or more systematic use of existing structures, manpower and funding rather than the generation of considerable new means); short in duration (although their effects should continue to be felt, in most cases and in ways sometimes difficult to predict at the outset, well beyond ILY); limited in terms of immediate audience and/or geographical coverage (although meant to have a 'multiplier effect'); and concrete in terms of (at least sometimes measurable) results sought."

As this Guide is available to interested NGOs, the treatment in this section is brief and selective. Only a sample of activities being undertaken by a limited range of NGOs are discussed. The fact remains, however, that what we term a NGO (and others sometimes call a

$$NGO + P_{VO} = (ABC)^n$$

PVO) is ubiquitous. Non-governmental organizations exist at all levels: international, national, community and "grass-roots". They include professional associations, service clubs, organizations serving the young and the old, women and men, "ordinary" people and those with special interests, needs or problems. Many are religious groups formed around a church, mosque or temple. The vast majority of NGOs work exclusively at the community level and have no formal links with either national or international NGOs.

NGOs could:

* inform their membership of the scope and implications of illiteracy - locally, nationally and internationally -, stressing aspects of illiteracy which directly concern the professional interests or relate to the purposes and goals of the NGO in question;

* keep their membership informed of efforts to promote education and literacy through pending legislation, new programmes being planned, or other efforts being undertaken;

* arrange displays on literacy and ILY at meetings or conventions;

* encourage and assist their membership in supporting governmental and non-governmental efforts in favour of literacy; this can be done at the local, national or international level;

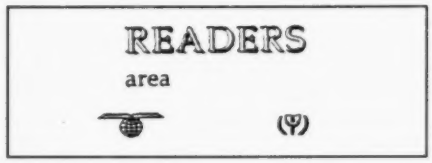
* mobilize professional talent within their membership to assist literacy and educational efforts by advising or by providing training or other specialized services;

* provide premises for literacy classes or help to furnish and equip them;

* organize youth camps and other forms of voluntary service to build or repair schools and literacy centres; construct equipment such as blackboards, chairs, desks and bookshelves;

Readers Area

The International Publishers Association, on the occasion of International Literacy Year, has begun a campaign to have areas in public places such as railway stations, airports, town halls and government offices designated as *Readers areas*. Such areas need not be elaborate or costly, but they should be comfortable and, as far as possible, quiet. *Readers areas* will be designated by this sign:



* sponsor library projects, including mobile libraries; encourage members to do voluntary work in existing libraries;

* engage in fund-raising for literacy projects, especially those serving individuals and groups with which the NGO has close links; organizations wishing to support literacy projects in other countries can do so either through the Unesco Co-Action Programme, which assists selected projects, or by contributing to the Unesco Special Account for World Literacy, which funds a wide range of innovative literacy activities (see further information at the end of this booklet);

* involve others in literacy work: service organizations, for example, have successfully enlisted the business community in supporting literacy activities; educational NGOs have recruited students as literacy instructors, collected and distributed books and learning materials, and helped in a wide variety of other ways;

* arrange co-operative projects among members in different countries on either a "North-North", "South-South", "South-North" or "North-South" basis; NGOs, for example, have established projects which twin national or local chapters of the organization or schools or towns in one country with those in another; often the sole purpose of such arrangements is the exchange of information; sometimes it results in a flow of materials or funds from one country to another to assist literacy or educational projects.

It is, in general, unnecessary to suggest to NGOs what they should be doing in literacy. Many have a long and rich experience in literacy work. It may be useful, however, to say a few words about particular types of NGOs which have demonstrated their interest in and capacity to carry out literacy activities. First, as we have already mentioned, educational NGOs are by their very nature involved in and concerned about literacy. ILY could be an opportunity to expand or improve their contributions to literacy.

Girl Guides

For the past forty years, the Pakistan Girl Guides Association has worked to give women and girls better access to agricultural training, literacy and knowledge of health and nutrition.

In 1954, adult literacy centres for women and girls were opened as part of the first government urban development programme in a depressed area of Karachi. In 1957, one thousand Girl Guides participated in an adult literacy campaign based on an "each-one-teach-one" scheme. Since then, the movement has blossomed. There are now fifty adult literacy centres run by the Girl Guides Association in both rural and urban centres. Women are invited to Guide rallies to learn about the history and culture of Pakistan through skits, dramas and speeches. Since 1957, 60,000 women have been trained in literacy and other skills such as sewing, nutrition, child care, hygiene, first aid and home nursing, poultry raising, vegetable growing and livestock keeping.

Another noteworthy aspect of the campaign has been the setting up of highly successful literacy programmes in three jails for women. Literacy skills have helped in the rehabilitation of inmates by increasing both their skills and self-respect.

A limiting factor in this exemplary literacy and adult education effort has been the inability to reach rural areas because of the lack of funds and transport facilities.

In many cases, the best service such NGOs can render is to continue doing what they exist to do. By advocating better working conditions for teachers, especially in developing countries where conditions of service are often harsh, teachers' organizations, for example, ensure one of the essential elements of any successful educational programme: motivated teachers and instructors. By supporting in-service training programmes for teachers and literacy instructors, they similarly increase the level of knowledge and know-how upon which literacy programmes can draw.

Youth organizations, including student organizations, are another category of NGOs normally engaged in the conduct of educational programmes of either a formal or a non-formal type. It is often possible for such organizations to extend their activities to include literacy, either for their members, if they are in need of

instruction, or through their members to the entire community. The account of the Girl Guides of Pakistan (see box) is a good example of what a committed organization can do with very limited resources. Student organizations have long been active in outreach programmes - often involving literacy instruction - in areas adjacent to their colleges or universities, or, during vacations, in projects in remote rural areas or urban slums.

Service clubs have an enviable record in supporting literacy. They have published guides to literacy work for their memberships, organized their youth auxiliaries to carry out literacy projects, raised funds, organized twinning arrangements between chapters in different countries, lobbied for more government support for education and aided literacy efforts in a wide variety of innovative ways. Many are planning special efforts for ILY.

Women's organizations have a particular interest in literacy. As already noted, in the world as a whole one woman in three is illiterate as compared to one man in five. Such organizations also enjoy the confidence of women and, in certain regions, possess a special advantage in gaining access to them in their homes and places of work. Women's organizations have been active in literacy projects and campaigns, often combining literacy instruction with training in sewing, child care, home gardening and other skills valued by participants. In recent years, there has been a strong tendency for the range of work-related literacy programmes for women to expand considerably. This is necessary as the idea of the home-bound woman is no more true in many "traditional cultures" than it is in urban centres of the West. Women frequently play a leading role in agriculture, livestock-keeping and commerce and need training to up-grade their skills in these areas.

Religious groups were among the first organizations to engage in literacy work and remain among the most active and effective. In Buddhist countries, the temple is often a centre of education and the monks are a major teaching force. In Islamic nations, the Koranic school has a centuries-long tradition of teaching literacy, often both in Arabic and in indigenous languages. The Catholic and Protestant churches have engaged in literacy work both at home and abroad. Churches have, for example, adopted resolutions calling upon governments to lend increased support to literacy, both domestically and through their foreign-aid programmes. In the Nordic countries, churches use donated funds to qualify for partnership grants from their government which enable them to carry on literacy activities in developing countries. On each International Literacy Day, 8 September, His Holiness the Pope issues a special message appealing to all peoples to support literacy as a human right and means for promoting human dignity. In all these and many more ways, religious bodies have made a precious contribution to the cause of literacy. In addition to these actions, it is important to keep in mind that access to religious scripture is often the strongest motivation for literacy in many parts of the world.

Within the Private Sector

The private sector - including factories, firms and other businesses - is increasingly involved in literacy. For some, such as publishers and booksellers, this involvement is a necessity. The future of their industry depends upon the state of literacy. For others, literacy is a cause they have selected to support. Instead of sponsoring a sports team, they have chosen to sponsor or co-sponsor a literacy project or programme, assist a school or aid a library. Such support takes many forms. Often, it is a contribution in kind or in services; less frequently,

it is a financial assistance to the sponsored activity. Or, instead of directly contributing to an educational activity, the firm may sponsor an event - a concert, for example - and contribute the proceeds to the project. These are valuable ways of aiding literacy and education: the gesture, the moral support implicit in the act being, in many cases, as important as the material assistance provided. In many countries, firms in the private sector have also provided premises for literacy classes, offering their own facilities or renting or rehabilitating other premises. These are laudable initiatives which demonstrate the commitment of these firms to education as well as their sense of civic responsibility. It is necessary, of course, that sponsors recognize the public function that schools and literacy programmes serve and be careful not to impose their own views and values upon them. It is also essential that the community bear in mind that private support for education is never a substitute for public responsibility.

By far the largest and most rapidly growing contribution of private firms to literacy is through the organization of remedial classes for their employees. This is often a virtual necessity where, for example, the introduction of new technologies or work procedures requires higher levels of knowledge and know-how. It is also often "good business" in that it increases the commitment and attachment of employees to the enterprises which, through training, have helped them to help themselves. A few examples, from among many that could be cited, of what employers are doing to promote literacy follow.

Private sector enterprises could:

* conduct, in co-operation with employee associations or unions, a confidential survey of employees needing and wanting assistance with literacy;

* plan, in co-operation with employee representatives, literacy programmes for those in need of them during work hours or meal hours or after hours; the effectiveness of such training opportunities is often greatly enhanced where employers provide incentives for those who become literate or substantially improve their levels of literacy to advance within the enterprise;

* set up mini-libraries within the enterprise or offer employees free subscriptions to newspapers or magazines;

* encourage and assist employees to set up a tutoring committee to designate employees to whom others can turn for assistance in improving their reading and writing skills.

Increasingly, training is vital to the success of enterprises, public or private, and firms are investing ever greater amounts of time and money in a wide variety of training activities. As they gain experience, firms tend to recognize that the root of the problem, and the reason why sophisticated training programmes fail to produce the expected results, is often because the basic skills of the trainees are inadequate. They cannot read, write or calculate with sufficient skill to master the complex tasks with which they are confronted. Hence, literacy training and remedial educational programmes, previously confined to schools or sponsored by charitable organizations, have entered more and more factories and firms. This tendency seems likely to continue. Accordingly, it can be expected that the private sector will be increasingly involved in literacy work, not only as a public service, but also as a condition of survival and success.

Through the Mass Media

Popular literacy is the product of the first revolution in modern communication: the invention of the printing press by Gutenberg in 1456. From that moment onward, the print media have been inescapably concerned with literacy. Radio has been widely used in literacy work for nearly half a century, especially in Latin America. Television is a relatively new tool in literacy work, but it is already being widely applied in both developing and industrialized countries. Pakistan, for example, conducted a successful experiment with the use of televised literacy programmes broadcast to village viewing centres. The BBC programme "On the Move" (see box) was, when introduced in 1975, a pioneering effort. During the past decade, it has inspired similar programmes in a number of countries. Growing use is being made of video-cassettes,

which provide the advantages of television combined with on-site control of viewing times and conditions. In short, the media are deeply involved in literacy: to a considerable degree through the direct teaching of literacy skills, and to an ever greater extent in recruiting and motivating potential learners and tutors.

Participants in the International Media Colloquium on Literacy, which as already indicated was organized by media leaders in May 1989 at the request of the ITFL and hosted by Unesco, discussed the role media can play in raising awareness and in reaching isolated groups of illiterate adults. A representative of the American Newspaper Publishers' Association emphasized the purpose of the involvement of newspapers in literacy: "The newspaper industry... aspires to a society in which citizens function at a higher than survival level".

In both industrialized and developing countries, the media can be a catalyst at the community level. Broadcasting and audio-visual materials in the North and South are tools of teaching, while the spread of literacy in developing countries is inseparably linked with the development of a strong, local media.

Enlightened publishers of newspapers, magazines and books will readily recognize their own self-interest in continuing and expanding their active support of literacy activities. They may be willing to provide surplus newspapers, magazines and books, or to help in other ways.

The Print Media

Among actions the print media might consider to promote literacy are the following:

* participate in public-awareness campaigns aimed at making the consequences of illiteracy more widely known;

* publish special issues of or pages in newspapers or magazines for the newly literate; such supplements should be brief, simply written, yet of interest and practical value; they should address new literates as the intelligent and knowledgeable adults they are; newspapers and magazines might view these issues as investments in the development of future readership;

* publish testimonials from or vignettes and anecdotes about newly-literate readers; personal success stories are always of interest and can be a powerful encouragement to others to enrol in literacy courses;

* publish editorials, special articles and series on literacy and education, thereby demonstrating their commitment and interest - and thus encourage political leaders and others to do the same;

* sponsor or even run literacy programmes; many newspapers have done so, often providing space, donating printed materials and equipment and encouraging their employees to serve as volunteer tutors;

* sponsor special contests and awards for literacy and reading, e.g. the "Young Reader of the Month" or the "Teacher of the Year" awards,

The Power of the Press

When a correspondent for a major Canadian newspaper group, Southam News, was unable to determine the extent of the illiteracy problem in Canada, an important chain of events was set in motion. In 1987, the publisher conducted a national, in-home literacy assessment of a representative sample of 2,400 adults, the results of which revealed that about 5 million out of 26 million Canadian adults were unable to cope with the ordinary reading, writing, and numeracy demands of the 1980s.

The major shift in Canadian public opinion which resulted from publishing these findings contributed to a decision on the part of the Federal Government to establish a national literacy secretariat. Provincial governments increased their support to literacy programmes; NGOs became involved on a larger scale; a significant increase in work-place literacy programmes sponsored by employers occurred; and there was a dramatic increase in the number of learners and volunteer tutors who came forward. The survey also provoked a debate on educational issues and policies: on how and why someone with twelve years of education did not possess adequate literacy skills. The Southam survey demonstrates the power of the media to change public perceptions of problems and influence government action to confront them.

thereby providing recognition and encouragement to individuals who render exemplary service;

* sponsor fund-raising events for literacy programmes;

* offer free advertisement to recruit learners and tutors for literacy programmes;

* provide free introductory subscriptions to graduates of literacy programmes.

Perhaps the greatest service the print media can render to literacy is to perform well their duty of informing the public. Quality education is not a narrow or parochial concern; it is the business of everyone. By paying due attention to educational issues and needs, the media ensure that the public is informed. And an accurate, factual, interesting and entertaining newspaper is in itself a powerful incentive for literacy. In particular, good coverage of local news and events is important. It links literacy to everyday life and makes reading more relevant and engaging.

The Electronic Media

The role of the print media in promoting literacy seems obvious to most people. The same is not true of the electronic media: radio and television. Indeed, it is common to speak of television in particular as part of the problem rather than as part of the solution. Yet, the electronic media can provide many of the same types of support as the print media. Most of the suggestions made above would, with suitable adaptation, apply to radio and television as well as to newspapers and magazines. In addition, radio and television are in a position to provide support not available through the print media. They are able, for example, to reach the illiterates directly, to speak to them, to inform them about the launching of new programmes and encourage them to enrol. In many countries, television offers literacy instruction either independently of or as a support to literacy programmes. Radio is extensively used as a support media. Radio and television are also widely and effectively used for the development and training of literacy staff who, because of their geographical dispersion, cannot be easily assembled for face-to-face training.

In brief, radio and television are two most valuable and effective tools for literacy. Programmes can stimulate the viewer or listener to start a learning project. They can help develop confidence in people with reading and writing difficulties, introduce them to learning experiences, encourage community participation and raise general public awareness.

The electronic media might consider:

* developing programmes in partnership with governments and community organizations;

The BBC: Media in Action

The BBC television series "On the Move" was launched in 1975 as a three-year effort to reach isolated adults with reading and writing difficulties. The series, intended to reach and motivate potential learners to seek instruction, was broadcast during peak time every Sunday evening. Another purpose of the programme was to mobilize literate adults to act as volunteer tutors.

In addition to radio and television programmes, the BBC set up a telephone-referral service for potential students and tutors and produced print materials and tapes for teaching adults and training tutors. The BBC's work had a catalytic effect in bringing the United Kingdom Adult Literacy Campaign into existence. For it to succeed, the BBC had to win and maintain the consent and good will of each of the 120 local education authorities who, as a result of the broadcasts, were faced with an influx of new students. The scale of the BBC's commitment, and the response it engendered, prompted the government to divert one million pounds per year from the budget for higher education to help local education authorities cope with the flow of students. This was the first time that substantial central-government funds had been allocated to support local literacy instruction.

Over three years, 150,000 adults sought assistance. The numbers in tuition jumped from about 5,000 in 1974 to over 100,000 in 1976. Increased government support was made available as the extent of the demand for services became apparent.

* building on the experience of "tele-clubs" to promote non-formal adult education programmes;

* broadcasting spots of a motivating nature to encourage participation in literacy programmes;

* giving news coverage to educational issues and developments concerning literacy;

* carrying staff-training programmes.

The comments in this section have been mainly addressed to the media. They suggest some of the actions media leaders might take to promote education and literacy. But you, as a reader or a viewer, also have a role to play. Your views and expectations count. Let the newspapers and magazines to which you subscribe and the television and radio stations you follow know what you think and want. If you want more coverage of educational issues and a stronger involvement in community literacy efforts, don't be shy about expressing yourself. Your requests will receive a warm welcome. Those who work in the media are by inclination and training persuaded of the importance of education and literacy and need only a little encouragement to get more actively involved. Indeed, as the International Media Colloquium on Literacy demonstrated, the media are already extensively and whole-heartedly contributing to the promotion of literacy in countries around the world.

Within the Halls of Government

The emphasis in this publication is on what you, the reader, can do to promote literacy. As concerns the role of governments, our purpose is to suggest areas where governmental action could be helpful. Many of the actions suggested are already being implemented in numerous countries, but they could be useful in others. It is in these areas where you, as an active citizen, may wish to urge your government to become involved or to strengthen its commitment and efforts.

Steps Forward

The President of Bangladesh, in launching International Literacy Year on 1 January 1990, announced two important initiatives to promote literacy in this country in which an estimated 65 per cent of adults are illiterate: (i) as quickly as school facilities can be provided and an adequate supply of teachers made available, primary education will become compulsory for all children, and (ii) the first eight years of school for girls living in rural areas will be free, all fees being eliminated.

Extending literacy to all should be primarily the responsibility of governments, with a supporting role for individuals, NGOs, community groups, the private sector, and international agencies. Government structures at all levels are particularly well-suited for assuming this responsibility. Government organizations have the ability to assess needs and priorities, to develop and implement policies, to adopt statutes and legislation, to provide funding, to sustain institutionalized structures, and to work in co-operation with other entities committed to promoting education and literacy. Regional and local governments can often contribute effectively to national efforts because of their knowledge of and ability to respond to local needs and conditions.

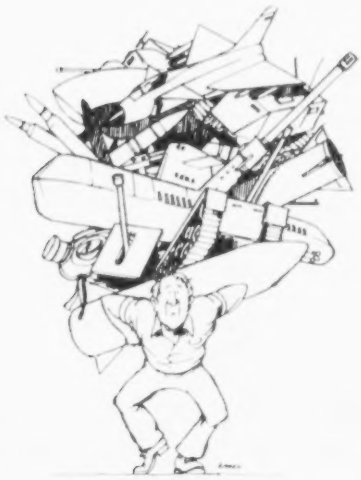
Where Are the Books?

One of the most serious shortcomings in African writing and book production today is the paucity of creative literature for children and young adults (aged 4 to 15 years). It is a case of neglect which is all the more serious because special institutions have been created for scholarly publishing, textbook production and mass adult literature with state support, but none for children's literature ... . Although children form 40 per cent of the population, their books represent only 5 per cent of African publications.

Source: S.I.A. Kotei, "The Book Today in Africa", quoted in Ralph C. Staiger, *"Developing the Reading Habit in Children"*, *Literacy Lessons*, IBE-Unesco, Geneva, 1990.

Education <-----> Peace

The Constitution of Unesco proclaims that *Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.* Yet, if education is essential for promoting peace, it is equally true that peace is an essential condition for the progress of education. The burden of the arms race consumes resources that could, if invested even in part in education, make a decisive difference:



* Military expenditure in the developing countries represents three times the amount spent on public health and one-third more than the sum spent on public education.

* The developed countries devote twenty times as much to the military sector as to aid to the Third World.

* US$900,000 million: this was the amount of military expenditure throughout the world in 1986 (as against US$355,700 million in 1976).

* US$1,190,000 million: this was the total of the developing countries' foreign debt in 1987 (as against US$98,000 million in 1973).

Source: *"Literacy, Human Rights and Peace"* by Ali Hamadache, in *Literacy Lessons*, IBE-Unesco, Geneva, 1990.

At the need-assessment level, governments could:

* assume responsibility for determining the extent and nature of illiteracy within their respective jurisdictions and the priority to be accorded to various programmes and initiatives geared to reducing illiteracy;

* consider undertaking campaigns to increase public awareness regarding the serious negative consequences of illiteracy and the positive benefits for all of a highly literate population;

* give importance not only to the acquisition of skills and the associated increase in economic and employment opportunities for learners, but also to the pride and satisfaction they gain from "knowing", the sense of control, of mastery of knowledge, of being aware, that comes with being literate.

At the policy level, governments could:

* make a long-term commitment to extend literacy to all citizens and residents within the next decade through initiatives ranging from national literacy campaigns to programmes designed for specific marginalized groups, the motor-handicapped, the blind, linguistic minorities, refugees, migrants, single mothers, prison inmates, and indigenous or tribal populations;

* recognize that literacy is meaningless without materials to read and take necessary measures to promote the production of books, documents, newspapers, magazines and other materials; books for children play an important role in instilling the reading habit and should not be overlooked;

* consider means for reducing or eliminating impediments to the importation and distribution of books and other printed materials;

* establish libraries, including mobile libraries serving rural areas, to make reading materials available and promote reading;

* consider the evaluation, recognition and certification of learning achieved through non-formal literacy programmes.

At the funding level, governments could:

* consider increasing resources for primary education - as a means of preventing further increases in illiteracy - and for continuing, adult, and non-formal education - as a means of reducing illiteracy problems among early school leavers and those who have never had the opportunity to participate in formal education.

ILY Committees

There is one particular area in which government action could do a great deal to promote ILY: the establishment of national committees and structures to plan and implement programmes for the Year. The United Nations guidelines for international years recommend the setting up of national committees and Unesco has constantly urged their establishment. ILY committees should, ideally, be broadly-based interministerial structures capable of co-ordinating action in literacy-related areas, including education, culture, communication, health, labour, commerce, environment and other development fields. In large countries the national ILY committees might be supported by state, provincial, district, municipal and local committees in order to reach down to the grass-roots level where literacy action takes place. In addition to various governmental departments, committees could include NGOs representing women and youth, religious organizations, business groups, social services and various professions. Indeed, all those capable of contributing to the deliberations of the ILY committees or of acting upon their decisions might be included. The notion is to have committees or structures which are inclusive, rather than exclusive, committees in which individuals and organizations with varying points of view may participate. In numbers and in diversity there is strength.

100 and More Committees

As of 1st March 1990, there are national committees or structures for ILY in 107 countries. A complete listing can be obtained from the ILY Secretariat of Unesco.

In fact, these recommendations, first made more than two years ago, have been followed in very large measure. There are presently ILY committees or structures in over 100 countries. Some committees have been set up especially for International Literacy Year. They take a variety of forms. One committee, for example, is concerned with both ILY and the World Decade for Cultural Development. A few committees are generously staffed and financed. Such committees are charged not only with planning a programme, but also with implementing it. Most committees, however, are co-ordinating structures. They possess or control few resources of their own, but rather act to stimulate and co-ordinate activities carried out by other governmental bodies or by NGOs. In the developing countries, where the struggle for literacy is already institutionalized, existing literacy committees, especially those created to carry out the regional literacy programmes, have taken on the charge of ILY. Often, this is an ideal arrangement as such committees are usually broadly-based and action-oriented. They are already engaged in carrying out activities and can use ILY to give fresh impetus and momentum to their efforts. In some cases, especially in the industrialized countries, it has been decided to assign responsibility to a particular department or unit, setting up an informal consultative mechanism, where necessary, to guide its work.

Unesco has sought to facilitate and support the work of the ILY committees in a number of ways. For example, the Director-General has earmarked $1 million under the Participation Programme for ILY-related activities. It is hoped, in particular, that developing countries with few resources for special ILY activities will avail themselves of this possibility. The Director-General has also requested governments, through their ILY committees and national commissions for Unesco, to nominate distinguished citizens as Honourary International Literacy Year Ambassadors. Such appointments are intended to provide prominent leadership for national

Good Prison Behaviour

In Central Java's Sragen Prison, a 1972 survey showed that over two-thirds of the prison inmates had not been beyond primary schooling, and as many as one-third were illiterate. Education and training were, thus, the cornerstones of the Kejar Paket programme initiated by the prison administration to provide literacy and income-generating skills to help inmates regain their place in the community. Literacy courses are linked to productive skill training. For more advanced students, small-scale market-oriented productive enterprises or business undertakings are initiated. The Directorate of Community Education provides tutors, instructors, books, learning materials and funds. The success of the experiment has led to its establishment in nineteen other prisons with 8,339 inmates.

literacy initiatives. These efforts underscore a point Unesco has emphasized ever since ILY was first proposed: namely, that the success of the Year will depend, in very substantial measure, upon the actions governments are prepared to take for ILY and after ILY to promote the cause of literacy.

Each nation and organization is, of course, at liberty to define its own objectives and goals for ILY. The broad objectives proposed by Unesco are intended only to provide a framework and orientation for national action. In many countries, especially in the developing regions of the world, massive illiteracy is the obvious issue to be addressed. In others, the issue may be how to convey a love and passion for reading to rising generations or to improve the quality of work-oriented literacy programmes. Some national committees are focusing upon the promotion of national languages, the renewal of old orthographies or the development of new ones, or upon measures to keep the elderly and the visually or physically handicapped within the reading community. All of these goals - and many, many more - are worthy and desirable. The programme for the Year has to fit national circumstances and aspirations. ILY is not a "fixed menu", but an invitation to use one's imagination, to study the local and national situation in order to define activities related to literacy, in the broad sense of the term, that make sense and are useful.

A point Unesco has sought to communicate to national committees is that 1990 is International Literacy Year, not simply a "Literacy Year". While it is essential that the programme of the Year address domestic issues and concerns, it is desirable that, if at all possible, there also be an international dimension, an exchange of ideas and experience among countries. If they are to rapidly expand and improve their educational systems, the least developed countries are urgently in need of material and financial support from the "North". But the "South" is certainly not impoverished as concerns experience in conducting literacy programmes. There is much that developing countries can teach to institutions in the "North", which have only quite recently embarked upon literacy work: how to reach and motivate learners, deal with linguistic or cultural exclusion, evaluate the social impact of programmes or prepare easy-to-read follow-up materials, etc. There is also a large place and evident need for so-called "South-South" and "North-North" co-operation focused upon common problems and concerns. In fact, co-operation is taking place around the compass.

As Unesco has repeatedly emphasized, illiteracy is not an educational problem alone, it is also a societal problem. It cannot be solved by schools or adult learning centres working in isolation from one another and from the society which sustains them. Thus, an appropriate goal for ILY, in nearly all countries, would be to broaden the alliance supporting literacy, to bring new players into the game. There might be a literacy dimension in the activities of nearly all ministries, departments or agencies, as in the following examples:

* A health ministry concerned about sanitation, family planning, nutrition, AIDS, or care of infants might, for example, prepare easy-to-read informational booklets designed to be read by the newly literate;

* A labour ministry could publish posters or easy-to-read materials on pesticide use, safety, work rules, or regulations for migrant workers;

* An agricultural ministry could publish post-literacy materials on digging wells, planting

cash crops in a backyard garden, or maintaining a tractor;

* A communication agency might focus on public awareness of efforts to reduce illiteracy, on distance education to extend staff development to literacy workers in remote areas, or on development of video-tapes or materials in local languages.

Other government agencies might publish post-literacy booklets on such topics as how to open a savings account or start a credit union, the dangers of drug addiction, folk tales and other aspects of a nation's cultural heritage, consumer protection issues, or the repair of tyres, bicycles, small engines, typewriters, sewing machines, etc.

In co-operation with other entities committed to International Literacy Year 1990, governments could:

* consider the issuance of commemorative postage stamps to inform the public about literacy issues (slogans on metred mail and on cancellations on postage stamps can reinforce this effort);

* consider actively seeking out NGOs engaged in literacy work and establishing strong ties with them; they might, for example, weigh the provision of systematic support to NGO literacy efforts or set up mechanisms for regular consultation with NGOs on literacy-related initiatives;

* consider supplementing local and voluntary literacy efforts through the provision of child care, meals, physical facilities, gifts or loans of equipment and materials, and staff development services. The enthusiasm and commitment of cooperatives, mothers' clubs, labour unions, neighbourhood-action federations, collective aid societies and consumer groups result in the establishment of powerful literacy programmes, the effectiveness and reach of which can often be multiplied many-fold with only a small infusion of governmental financial support.

* consider strategies or policies for recognizing and rewarding private sector enterprises which establish and maintain work-place literacy programmes or which support other community and NGO literacy efforts;

* consider making formal educational facilities and other government buildings available to NGOs and community groups for after-hours literacy activities;

* consider establishing or expanding literacy programmes in penal institutions, offering appropriate incentives to encourage participation.

Governments, in brief, have the ultimate responsibility for education and literacy, for it is to the government that a society turns - in the last resort, if not in the first - to meet its collective needs and resolve its common problems. Normally, there will be countless actors involved in literacy work. But governments have the duty to ensure that what is required is done; that an education adequate to meet the needs of today and tomorrow is provided through appropriate channels. Hence, citizens should make known their concern for literacy - that is, for better schools as well as for more effective and widespread out-of-school programmes - and work through and with governments to achieve educational objectives. Governments have to be concerned because education, in substantial measure, will determine the fate and future of a society.

Through the United Nations

ILY is a United Nations year proclaimed by the General Assembly. To emphasize this, the Director-General of Unesco, the organization invited by the General Assembly to play the leading role, has requested all United Nations Agencies, as well as many regional intergovernmental organizations, to participate in the programmes of ILY. All of the major Agencies are planning different activities related to the Year. Unesco has co-operated with the UNDP, the World Bank and UNICEF in sponsoring the World Conference on Education for All which took place in Thailand in March 1990. The follow-up to this Conference is

expected to give fresh impetus to efforts to spread education and literacy.

Each organization's action, of course, relates to its own field of specialization. The International Labour Organisation (ILO), for example, is concerned with literacy in the training and retraining of workers, with the relationship of literacy to occupational safety and, more generally, with the problems illiteracy poses in the work-place. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is concerned with the role of literacy, education and training in the mastery of new agricultural processes and procedures. The World Health Organization's (WHO) interest concerns the relationship between literacy and receptivity to improved nutritional and health practices. The Universal Postal Union (UPU) has joined in promoting ILY by inviting national postal services to issue special stamps on the occasion of the Year. ILY is indeed a United Nations year in which the entire United Nations family is involved.

You can be involved in the activities of the United Nations organizations in several ways. First, through your government and, in the case of Unesco, through the National Commission of your country. The National Commissions for Unesco serve as a point of contact and liaison between the citizens, institutions and government of a country on the one hand and the Organization on the other. They provide a channel through which you can inform yourself on Unesco activities and express your views regarding them. Many National Commissions conduct extensive consultations and actively seek the views of specialists and the public concerning issues before Unesco. For over forty years, Unesco has been concerned with literacy, but the present status of literacy within the programme, that of "absolute priority", is the result of the importance that governments and their citizens attach to this issue.

Secondly, one can also work with United Nations Agencies, and with Unesco in particular, through NGOs. Several hundred NGOs have agreements of mutual co-operation and exchange of information with Unesco and participate actively in the formulation of programme proposals by informing the Secretariat and the General Conference of their views on issues under consideration. Each year a Collective Consultation of NGOs on Literacy is held as a means for promoting co-operation among NGOs and between NGOs and Unesco. The total membership of the organizations which participate in this consultation numbers in the millions.

Finally, you can correspond directly with Unesco and other United Nations Agencies. In 1989, over 40,000 people wrote to the ILY Secretariat of Unesco to request information and thousands more did so to make suggestions or offer help. You can also contribute to Unesco's efforts in the field of literacy through donations to the Co-Action Programme or to the Special Account for World Literacy. Information on these channels of assistance is contained in this publication.

Conclusion

The preceding pages have cited scores of examples of the things you can do in your home, school and community as well as through organizations, the private sector, the media and governments. Our suggestions are selective, not exhaustive. They are intended to prick your imagination and nudge your conscience, not to serve as a recipe to be obediently followed. You are the expert on what needs to be done "chez vous". Our ideas may be close to the mark or far off. But what is certain is that fostering the creation of a literate world is an enormous task, and there is a part in it for you.

The process of change must begin with awareness - finding out what the situation is and figuring out what can be done to improve it. But it cannot stop there: knowledge which does not lead to action is sterile. There must be mobilization, organization and, above all else, vigorous, systematic and persevering action.

Where to begin? Begin at home. Our world consists of a billion households. If they change, the whole world will be transformed. But you need not confine yourself to your own four walls. There is the school that needs your help and a community which requires your involvement and support. Also, remember that this is not "Literacy Year", but International

Literacy Year. Illiteracy may be a local problem, but it is also a worldwide one.

There are many good arguments for literacy: literacy for dignity, for development, for communication .... But perhaps the best argument for literacy is the simple joy and endless wonder that reading can offer. If you love reading, there is no need to persuade you that literacy is important or to coax you to do something to encourage it. To the book-lover, reading is an end in itself - not a means to some more ultimate goal. Let us, by all means, seize the opportunity of ILY and make 1990 a decisive turning point in the struggle to achieve a literate world. And, in doing so, let us be serious, but never solemn. The joy of reading is, in the final accounting, the best reason and ultimate argument for literacy. Literacy is not a duty - it is a privilege and a pleasure, one so precious that it should be denied to none.

And, if the task is enormous and the stakes high, the prospects are promising. Progress in literacy, as the Director-General of Unesco has emphasized, is self-reinforcing: "every new literate represents a mind that can be mobilized to combat the syndrome of deprivation, inequality, ill-health and other woes of which illiteracy is a part". Yes, creating a literate world is an enormous challenge, but it is no longer an impossible dream. We know what must be done and in many parts of the globe impressive progress is being made. The need is to step up the tempo of action, launch new initiatives and expand on-going efforts. But these are not merely things that others should do. You, too, have a part to play and a contribution to make. Be it large or small, your help is needed and wanted. This publication has endeavoured to suggest some of the ways in which you might help, but there are many, many more possibilities. The choice is yours; the limits are set only by the reach of your imagination. ILY is, above all else, a year of opportunity.

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8 September: International Literacy Day

On this day, each year, the Unesco literacy prizes are awarded. In 1990, the twenty-fifth anniversary of International Literacy Day, the following prizes will be awarded in a ceremony in Geneva at the conclusion of the 42nd session of the International Conference on Education, which will meet to discuss the formulation and implementation of policies to promote literacy and provide education for all:

Nadezhda K. Krupskaya Prize

Nadezhda K. Krupskaya was the wife of Lenin and played a major role in the Soviet literacy campaign. This prize, established in 1969, is donated by the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

International Reading Association Literacy Award

This award, established in 1979, is donated by the Association the name of which it bears. The IRA has more than 80,000 members in countries around the world, many of whom are teachers of reading.

Noma Prize

This prize, established in 1980, is named for the prominent Japanese publisher, the late Mr Shoichi Noma, and donated by his family in his memory. Mr Noma worked actively for many years to promote the development of literature and publishing in developing countries.

Iraq Literacy Prize

This prize was endowed by the Government of Iraq in 1981 to celebrate the success of its literacy campaign and to encourage others to launch literacy initiatives.

King Sejong Prize

This prize, to be offered for the first time in 1990, is donated by the Republic of Korea in honour of King Sejong, the Korean king responsible for the establishment of the Korean alphabet in 1446.

What happens on 8 September in your school, in your community, in your country, or in the organizations to which you belong? You could honour a teacher who has done an outstanding job in teaching reading, or a librarian who is encouraging reading. Or you could do countless other things to celebrate literacy and honour those who contribute to its promotion. The only limit is the reach of your imagination!

A VOTE OF THANKS

According to the United Nations guidelines, international years should be financed, in so far as possible, from voluntary contributions and not from the regular budgets of the organizations concerned. Unesco Member States emphasized the same point, stressing that ILY must not be financed at the expense of support for literacy action in developing countries. Accordingly, voluntary contributions have been and are essential in enabling the ILY Secretariat to carry out its work of preparation and mobilization.

Special thanks are due to:

- Canada for financing the printing of this publication;
- Finland for contributing $143,000 to the Special Account for World Literacy for ILY-related activities;
- Japan for providing an Associate Expert to serve in the ILY Secretariat;
- Republic of Korea for donating 100,000 lapel pins bearing the ILY logo;
- Norway for providing an Associate Expert to serve in the ILY Secretariat;
- Sweden for providing two Associate Experts and for financing internships in the ILY Secretariat for two young professional women from developing countries;
- Apple Corporation for donating word-processing equipment for the preparation of ILY newsletters;
- CODE (The Canadian Organization for Development through Education) for printing the official ILY poster and for its support to this publication;
- International Reading Association for providing, under a grant from the United States Government, a reading specialist to serve in the ILY Secretariat.
- Zanders Feinpapiere A.G. for donating paper to the ILY Secretariat for use in re-printing the official ILY poster.

THANKS TO ALL OF YOU!

Help Yourself!

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International Literacy Year Secretariat
Unesco, 75700 Paris, France

Help Others!

Many ways of helping literacy organizations in your community - through donations in cash, in kind or in services - are mentioned in this publication. If you wish to assist literacy efforts in developing countries, where the need is greatest, Unesco provides two channels: the Special Account for World Literacy and the Co-Action Programme. Donations to the Special Account may be addressed to the Education Sector, Unesco, 75700 Paris, France. A catalogue of literacy projects aided by the Co-Action Programme can be obtained from the Unesco Co-Action Programme, BAO/CSF, Unesco, 75700 Paris, France. The Co-Action Programme enables one to channel donations to particular projects in nearly twenty countries whereas the Special Account supports a wide variety of literacy-related activities, many of an innovative character, in all parts of the world.

Art and photo credits

Drawings on pages 8, 9 and 15 are by John Fox. The illustration on page 20 is from a brochure on the 'Book Voyage' published by the International Task Force on Literacy; that on page 28 is the cover page of "Guess What I am Doing" published by the Asian Cultural Centre for Unesco. Drawings on pages 34 and 39 are taken from *Literacy Lessons* published by the International Bureau of Education, Geneva; the names of the artists are not indicated. Artwork in other parts of the publications has been done by Jeanette Wahi, an Associate Expert assigned to the International Literacy Year Secretariat.

Photographs are by Unesco : that on page 3 is by Dominique Roger, those on pages 21, 22 and 23 are by Paul Almasy, the photos on page 24 are by L.P. Raota (face) and T. Maracan (hands), that on page 25 is by A.P. Garcia and that on page 26 by Eric Schwab.

Design and layout : Graphics Group / France.

The official ILY logo is the creation of Mr. Koichi Imakita, a Japanese graphic designer. Mr. Imakita's entry was the winner among 300 finalists in a contest conducted for Unesco by the International Association of Art as a contribution to International Literacy Year.

An abridged edition of this text in Braille is being considered. Persons wishing to receive the Braille edition are invited to contact the International Literacy Year Secretariat, Unesco.

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